

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1355

To posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal to Simeon Booker in recognition of his achievements in the field of journalism, including his reporting during the Civil Rights movement and his social and political commentary.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 25, 2019

Mr. RYAN (for himself, Mr. JOYCE of Ohio, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Mr. PASCRELL, Mrs. BEATTY, Ms. MOORE, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. LAWSON of Florida, Ms. NORTON, Ms. JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Mr. RASKIN, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. FUDGE, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. SEWELL of Alabama, Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ, Mr. COHEN, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, and Mr. RUSH) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal to Simeon Booker in recognition of his achievements in the field of journalism, including his reporting during the Civil Rights movement and his social and political commentary.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) Simeon Saunders Booker, Jr., was born on  
4 August 27, 1918, in Baltimore, Maryland, to  
5 Reberta Waring and Simeon Saunders Booker, Sr.,  
6 a YMCA director and minister.

7 (2) After his family moved to Youngstown,  
8 Ohio, Booker became interested in journalism.

9 (3) Booker promoted and wrote about Negro  
10 League baseball teams in Youngstown's local news-  
11 paper, The Vindicator.

12 (4) In 1945, he moved back to Ohio to work for  
13 the Call and Post, where he became the first Afri-  
14 can-American reporter to win a Newspaper Guild  
15 Award for his series on Cleveland, Ohio, slum hous-  
16 ing, and a Willkie Award for reporting on racial in-  
17 equities in the public schools.

18 (5) In 1950, Booker was the recipient of the  
19 Nieman Fellowship from Harvard University to  
20 study journalism and develop his talent as a re-  
21 porter.

22 (6) After leaving Harvard in 1951, Booker be-  
23 came the first full-time African-American reporter at  
24 The Washington Post.

25 (7) In 1955, he helped to advance the civil  
26 rights movement with his famous coverage of the

1 Emmett Till murder and trial, turning a common  
2 occurrence in the Deep South into a national trag-  
3 edy that united the Black community.

4 (8) He remained at the forefront of the civil  
5 rights movement, reporting on the 1957 integration  
6 of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

7 (9) In 1961, he rode with the Congress on Ra-  
8 cial Equality (CORE) Freedom Riders through the  
9 Deep South.

10 (10) When the Freedom Riders were  
11 firebombed and beaten in Anniston, Alabama, in a  
12 Ku Klux Klan ambush, Booker arranged for their  
13 rescue by calling U.S. Attorney General Robert F.  
14 Kennedy.

15 (11) In two wartime tours of Vietnam in the  
16 1960s, he interviewed Black troops on the front  
17 lines, and took enemy fire in a helicopter with  
18 United States Army General William Westmoreland  
19 for reports for Jet and Ebony magazines.

20 (12) He has chronicled the most tumultuous pe-  
21 riod in American history in two highly acclaimed  
22 books, Shocking the Conscience: A Reporter's Ac-  
23 count of the Civil Rights Movement (University  
24 Press of Mississippi, 2013), and Black Man's Amer-  
25 ica (Prentice Hall, 1964).

1           (13) Often called the “dean of the black press”,  
2           as chief of Ebony and Jet magazines’ Washington  
3           bureau, he interviewed presidents, senators and rep-  
4           resentatives, members of the judiciary, cabinet offi-  
5           cers, foreign ambassadors, and other important  
6           members of the Washington community. His col-  
7           umn, “Ticker Tape U.S.A.” became a must-read for  
8           politicians and government officials.

9           (14) He covered every Presidential election  
10          since the Eisenhower Administration in his fifty-  
11          three years with Johnson Publishing until he retired  
12          in 2007.

13          (15) In 1982, Booker received one of the most  
14          prestigious awards in journalism, the National Press  
15          Club’s Fourth Estate Award.

16          (16) His honors and awards include: Nieman  
17          Fellowship, Harvard University 1950; elected presi-  
18          dent of the Capitol Press Club, 1956; Fourth Estate  
19          Award, National Press Club, 1982; inducted into  
20          Hall of Fame, Washington Chapter of Sigma Delta  
21          Chi, and Hall of Fame of Washington, DC, 1984;  
22          Master Communicators Award, National Black  
23          Media Coalition, 1998; Phoenix Award, Congres-  
24          sional Black Caucus Foundation, 2010; inducted

1 into Hall of Fame, National Association of Black  
2 Journalists, 2013.

3 **SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

4 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of  
5 the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tem-  
6 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements  
7 for the posthumous presentation, on behalf of the Con-  
8 gress, of a gold medal of appropriate design, in commemo-  
9 ration of Simeon Saunders Booker, Jr., in recognition of  
10 his achievements in the field of journalism, including his  
11 reporting during the Civil Rights movement and his social  
12 and political commentary.

13 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the  
14 presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary  
15 of the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Sec-  
16 retary”) shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems,  
17 devices, and inscriptions to be determined by the Sec-  
18 retary.

19 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the  
21 gold medal in honor of Simeon Saunders Booker,  
22 Jr., under subsection (a), the gold medal shall be  
23 given to the Smithsonian Institution, where it shall  
24 be available for display as appropriate and made  
25 available for research.

1           (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of  
2       Congress that the Smithsonian Institution shall  
3       make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)  
4       available for display elsewhere, particularly at other  
5       appropriate locations associated with the life of  
6       Simeon Saunders Booker, Jr.

7   **SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

8       The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in  
9       bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 2  
10      under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at  
11      a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,  
12      materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses,  
13      and the cost of the gold medal.

14   **SEC. 4. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

15      (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-  
16      ant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter  
17      51 of title 31, United States Code.

18      (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections  
19      5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals  
20      struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic  
21      items.

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